

A Spirit-Led Life

(Learning to Hear the Voice of God)

Before we accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior and became Christians, we lived our lives according to the ways of the world. As we grew up, we were taught according to the world's standards, morals, and cultural expectations. It was the only way we knew. We were unaware that there was any other way to live. Then the Holy Spirit spoke to our hearts. He convicted us of our sins and revealed Jesus to us. When we accepted Christ into our hearts, a completely new world opened up to us. Our spirits were born-again. The Holy Spirit came to live inside of us. We now had an awareness of the spiritual world. As a result, we no longer are confined to the natural world of our five senses. We no longer are left to figure things out exclusively by our own thinking or to solve our problems alone. We now have access to our almighty, all-knowing, all-powerful, ever-present, all-loving God. We are given the privilege of getting wisdom and understanding from God to help us navigate through life. Anytime, day or night, we can come to God and ask Him for His help, His guidance, and His direction. We have been given an instruction book that has everything we need to lead a life filled with peace and love and to be fruitful and significant. We have the opportunity to make our lives count for eternity, not just for this temporary world. We now have the opportunity to live our lives being "led by the Spirit" of God.

(Romans 8:5-16 NLT) "Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. {6} If your sinful nature controls your mind, there is death. But if the Holy Spirit controls your mind, there is life and peace. {7} For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. {8} That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God. {9} But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them are not Christians at all.) {10} Since Christ lives within you, even though your body will die because of sin, your spirit is alive because you have been made right with God. {11} The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as he raised Christ from the dead, he will give life to your mortal body by this same Spirit living within you. {12} So, dear Christian friends, you have no obligation whatsoever to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. {13} For if you keep on following it, you will perish. But if through the power of the Holy Spirit you turn from it and its evil deeds, you will live. {14} For all who are led by the Spirit

of God are children of God. {15} So you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God's very own children, adopted into his family--calling him "Father, dear Father." {16} For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God's children."

(Romans 8:14 NKJV) "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."

The Bible makes a clear distinction between living a life being controlled by our sinful selves and living a life being controlled by the Spirit of God. Every day we must make a decision - are we going to do things God's way or are we going to do things our own way?

So how do we make the transition from the way we have always processed life in our own minds, to being led by the Spirit of God. How do we do that? How do we to start living lives that are more and more being led by the Spirit and not by our own desires or the standards of the world around us? The answer lies in building relationship with the Holy Spirit. **We learn to listen for, and hear the voice of God.** It is through the Holy Spirit that we first met with God - and it is in the spirit realm that we grow to know Him more. As we build a strong, on-going, daily relationship with the Holy Spirit, we become more and more sensitive to His voice speaking to our heart and giving us instruction and direction.



Question 1 - Can every Christian hear the voice of God?

Yes. You do not need to be someone who has been a Christian for a long time; you do not need to be a pastor, or a prophet. Every believer can hear the voice of God and be led by the Spirit. If you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you have already personally heard and responded to the voice of the Holy Spirit. That is how you became a Christian.

(John 16:8 NKJV) "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:"

It was the voice of the Holy Spirit that convicted you of your sin. The Holy Spirit revealed to you that Jesus died for you, was resurrected, and is the Messiah. This is not something you can understand or know in your natural

minds. It is a spiritual revelation that you received. No one can say that Christ is Lord apart from the Holy Spirit. Every born-again believer can hear the voice of God.

*(1 Corinthians 12:3 NLT) "So I want you to know how to discern what is truly from God: No one speaking by the Spirit of God can curse Jesus, and no one is able to say, "Jesus is Lord," **except by the Holy Spirit.**"*

*(Colossians 1:26 NKJV) "the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been **revealed** to His saints."*

Jesus has been revealed to you. The Holy Spirit has spoken to your spirit. He convicted you of your sin and revealed the truth of the Gospel to you. As we saw in Romans 8:11, *"The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you."* The Holy Spirit has come to live in you!

(1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NLT) "Or don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, {20} for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body."

(1 John 3:24 NLT) "Those who obey God's commandments live in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Holy Spirit lives in us."

(1 John 4:13 NLT) "And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us."

This is just the beginning of our relationship with the Holy Spirit. He wants to have an ongoing relationship with you. The Holy Spirit has come to live in you. We are one spirit with God.

(1 Corinthians 6:17 NLT) "But the person who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him."

God has so much more that He wants to reveal to you.

(1 Corinthians 3:16 NKJV) "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"

(Go to the next page.)

Personal Testimony

1 Corinthians 3:16 has special meaning to me. When I was first saved, I had an inexplicable hunger for the Word of God. I immediately bought a Bible from the church bookstore. Every night after my children were in bed I would sit and read the Word. I was also a heavy smoker. I would sit at my dining room table with the Bible in one hand and a cigarette in the other hand - chain-smoking as I read. One evening I came across this Scripture in 1 Corinthians. It said that I was "*the temple of God*" and "*the Spirit of God dwells*" in me. Suddenly, a light bulb went on in my head. I looked at the Scripture, and looked at the cigarette and looked back at the Scripture again. Revelation hit me for the first time. I was putting smoke, tar and nicotine into the same body that God had come to live in! I put out the cigarette and instantly was delivered from my addiction. I never had another cigarette and never wanted one. Even though I was a brand new Christian, I was able to hear the Holy Spirit speaking to me through the Word.

One of the greatest gifts God gives us is a personal relationship with Him. He wants to communicate with us, to have a vibrant, exciting, on-going dialogue with us. He wants to hear from us and for us to hear from Him.

(1 Corinthians 2:9-16 NLT) "That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." {10} But we know these things because God has revealed them to us by his Spirit, and his Spirit searches out everything and shows us even God's deep secrets. {11} No one can know what anyone else is really thinking except that person alone, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. {12} And God has actually given us his Spirit (not the world's spirit) so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us. {13} When we tell you this, we do not use words of human wisdom. We speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths. {14} But people who aren't Christians can't understand these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them because only those who have the Spirit can understand what the Spirit means. {15} We who have the Spirit understand these things, but others can't understand us at all. {16} How could they? For, "Who can know what the Lord is thinking? Who can give him counsel?" But we can understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ."

God is ready to speak to you. Are you ready to listen?



Question 2 - Do you really want to hear from God?

The first step in listening is to have a desire to hear what God has to say to you. Do you have a desire to hear from God? Some people who call themselves Christians do not want to hear from God. They want to be left alone to live their life the way they want to. They say some words about accepting Jesus as their Savior, but he never truly becomes their Savior and Lord. Yes, they want to go to heaven, but they want to live their life the way they want to on earth. They do not want God involved in their life. They do not want God to “mess up” or “change” the way they are living. You cannot truly accept Jesus as your Savior and then simply walk away from Him. It would be like me walking out to the street tonight and declaring to some stranger that I wanted to marry him, and then walk away from him, never to see him again. I voiced a desire for a relationship, but never spent more than a few minutes with him - just long enough to say a few words. I never really started a relationship. If I met him a week later, I would not recognize him and he would not know me. Only a few words were spoken by me. That is what some people do. They say a few words to God and expect to go about their lives as if He never existed. You cannot have a genuine relationship with God if you do not want to know Him. However, if you truly have an encounter with God, and have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you will have a hunger to know Him more and to hear His voice, so you can be led by His Spirit.

Do you want to hear the voice of God? It is a very personal question. You may say yes, of course I do, but be aware that once you hear from Him, you have a responsibility to respond to what He says. Do you want to surrender your life to Him? Do you want to obey what He says? Do you trust Him enough to submit your life's decisions to His wisdom? You may be thinking, well of course I do, but think carefully about that.

What if God says something to you that you do not like? Some people want to hear from God when it makes them feel good, or it is something they agree with. They want the good feelings, the promises for prosperity and good health, but they do not want to hear from God when it comes to forgiveness, or serving others. They want the joy of hearing from Him about their future and the good things He has in store for them, but they still want to hold on to their anger or bitterness. They want to prophesy or lay hands on the sick, but they like to gossip and judge people. They have **selective listening** when it comes to God. We all are tempted to fall into this

category when God asks us to do something we don't want to do. We say, "Is that really you God?" We know deep down in our hearts that it is really God speaking to us.

Do you really want to hear from God all the time, in every situation? If so, tell Him. Tell Him that you want to hear His voice. Tell Him you want to obey His commands and follow His direction. Make a decision right now to lead a Spirit-led life.

Question 3 - How do you recognize the voice of the Holy Spirit?

Once you make the decision that you want to hear from God - in every area of your life, how do you recognize His voice? How do you know for sure that you are hearing from God?

*(1 Samuel 3:1-19 NKJV) "Then the boy Samuel ministered to the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation. {2} And it came to pass at that time, while Eli was lying down in his place, and when his eyes had begun to grow so dim that he could not see, {3} and before the lamp of God went out in the tabernacle of the LORD where the ark of God was, and while Samuel was lying down, {4} that the LORD called Samuel. And he answered, "**Here I am!**" {5} So he ran to Eli and said, "**Here I am**, for you called me." And he said, "I did not call; lie down again." And he went and lay down. {6} Then the LORD called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, "**Here I am**, for you called me." He answered, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." {7} (Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor was the word of the LORD yet revealed to him.) {8} And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. Then he arose and went to Eli, and said, "**Here I am**, for you did call me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD had called the boy. {9} Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. {10} Now the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears." {11} Then the LORD said to Samuel: "Behold, I will do something in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. {12} "In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. {13} "For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them. {14} "And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever." {15} So Samuel lay down until morning, and opened the doors of the house of*

*the LORD. And Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the vision. {16} Then Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son!" And he answered, "**Here I am.**" {17} And he said, "What is the word that the Lord spoke to you? Please do not hide it from me. God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the things that He said to you." {18} Then Samuel told him everything, and hid nothing from him. And he said, "It is the LORD. Let Him do what seems good to Him." {19} So Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground."*

Samuel had never before heard the voice of God. When God spoke to him, he thought it was Eli. Eli gave Samuel instructions on what to do. When we are first saved, we may not recognize the voice of God. If I called you on the telephone and you have never spoken to me before, you would not recognize my voice. You would have to look at the caller ID. However, if I call my husband, he knows my voice right away because he has heard it so many times. It is the same with God. The longer you know Him the easier it is to hear and recognize His voice.

(John 10:27 NLT) "My sheep recognize my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

What are some guidelines we can use to determine if what we are hearing is the voice of the Holy Spirit?

1. The voice of the Holy Spirit...is always in agreement with the Word of God.

God speaks to us through His Word. It is a privilege and a blessing to have a Bible of our own. We must read the Word of God every day. Each day we can read it and get to know God's character, His ways, His promises and His commandments to us. As we read the Word, our minds become renewed so we can think the way God thinks and know His will. When you hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, it will be in agreement with the Word of God. God never contradicts Himself.

(Romans 12:2 NLT) "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is."

The better we know the Word, the easier we can recognize His voice.

2. The voice of the Holy Spirit... always draws us, inviting us to walk closer to God.

When the Holy Spirit speaks to you, what you hear will bring you closer to Him.

(Colossians 1:10 NKJV) "that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;"

When we walk closer to God, we begin to act more and more like Jesus.

(Ephesians 4:1-3 NKJV) "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, {2} with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, {3} endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

(Ephesians 4:2 NLT) "{2} Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love"

3. The voice of the Holy Spirit...convicts us of sin so that we can repent and do what is right.

The Holy Spirit is our "Helper." He is always there for us, but He never forces us to do anything. He will show us the truth about sin, but we must make the choice to turn away from it. The choice is ours. Will we respond to the voice of God and turn from our sin?

(John 16:7-14 NKJV) ""Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. {8} "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment"

(2 Timothy 3:16 NLT) "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right."

4. The voice of the Holy Spirit...gives us wisdom and understanding.

(Ephesians 1:17 NLT) "asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you might grow in your knowledge of God."

(1 Corinthians 2:10-14 NLT) "But we know these things because God has revealed them to us by his Spirit, and his Spirit searches out everything and shows us even God's deep secrets. {11} No one can know what anyone else is really thinking except that person alone, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. {12} And God has actually given us his Spirit (not the world's spirit) so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us. {13} When we tell you this, we do not use words of human wisdom. We speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths. {14} But people who aren't Christians can't understand these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them because only those who have the Spirit can understand what the Spirit means."

5. The voice of the Holy Spirit... brings a witness and a peace in our hearts. God's voice will not cause confusion.

(1 Corinthians 14:33 NKJV) "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints."

(James 3:16 NKJV) "For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there."

Strong's Greek dictionary defines the original word for confusion as, Confusion: Strong's 181. akatastasia, ak-at-as-tah-see'-ah; from G182; instability, i.e. disorder:--commotion, confusion, tumult.

6. The voice of the Holy Spirit... glorifies God.

(John 16:14 NKJV) "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you."

If what you hear does not glorify God, it is not the Holy Spirit speaking.



Question 4 - How do you put yourself in a position to hear from God?

It has to be a priority in your daily life. Seek to know God more every day. Realize that you do not have to do it on your own. The Holy Spirit is with you. He was the one who first drew you to God and He will continue to reveal truth to you.

You have to be listening. Life gets so busy some times that we forget to listen for God. We may pray in the morning or evening, but what about the rest of the day. We should have an ear open to the Holy Spirit throughout the day.

1. Develop a love for the Word.

Psalm 119 is inspirational to me. The Psalmist has an incredible “whole-hearted” love for the Word of God.

(Psalms 119:47-48 NLT) "How I delight in your commands! How I love them! {48} I honor and love your commands. I meditate on your principles."

2. Pray

(Psalms 119:58 ICB) "I prayed to you with all my heart. Be kind to me as you have promised."

We can pray “with the spirit.”

(1 Corinthians 14:14-15 NKJV) "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. {15} What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding."

(Romans 8:26 NKJV) "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

3. Worship

(John 4:24 NLT) "For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."

4. Have a hunger and an attitude of seeking God.

Psalms 119:10 NKJV) "With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!"

We have to work at it. Our flesh does not want to seek God.

(Romans 12:11 NLT) "Never be lazy in your work, but serve the Lord enthusiastically."

(Mark 14:38 NLT) "Keep alert and pray. Otherwise temptation will overpower you. For though the spirit is willing enough, the body is weak."

5. Spend time with godly people.

(Hebrews 10:25 GWT) "We should not stop gathering together with other believers, as some of you are doing. Instead, we must continue to encourage each other even more as we see the day of the Lord coming."

6. Love God.

(John 14:23-24 NLT) "Jesus replied, "All those who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and live with them. {24} Anyone who doesn't love me will not do what I say. And remember, my words are not my own. This message is from the Father who sent me."

(Proverbs 8:17 NKJV) "I love those who love me, And those who seek me diligently will find me."



Question 5 - What do you do once you have heard from Him?

1. Determine to obey Him.

We saw the command from the Father in the previous Scripture. It bears repeating.

John 14:23-24 NLT) "Jesus replied, "All those who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and live with them. {24} Anyone who doesn't love me will not do what I say. And remember, my words are not my own. This message is from the Father who sent me.

(Psalms 119:69 NLT) "Arrogant people have made up lies about me, but in truth I obey your commandments with all my heart."

(Psalms 119:133 NLT) "Guide my steps by your word, so I will not be overcome by any evil."

Even in the smallest of things, determine in your heart to obey Him. If you feel the Holy Spirit is asking you to make a telephone call to someone, call them. If you are driving and the Holy Spirit says, "go this way" then go that way. If the Holy Spirit points out something in your house that does not please God - a book, a movie, a magazine, and idol - then get rid of it. It is in the small obediences that we build our trust in hearing His voice. It is in the small obediences that we involve God more and more in our daily life. It is in the small obediences that we get stronger and more confident that we know His voice.

2. Seek God for the proper timing to implement what you heard.

(Luke 12:12 NKJV) "For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

A Final Thought

The whole lesson can be summed up in this final Scripture:

(John 6:63 NLT) "It is the Spirit who gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life."